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TOP OF THE WEEK

Fall overhaul planned for network lineups

In preparing to announce their fall schedules next week and the week after, the three broadcast networks and Fox won't hesitate to make drastic changes. Last year the networks were faulted for taking few chances with their programming choices and for what was perceived as a hesitancy in making necessary changes in their schedules this time last year. This year each network has glaring needs going into the 1990-91 television season—from NBC and ABC having to overhaul at least one entire night, to Fox adding another night of series programming on Friday, to CBS, whose needs are nearly across the board.

At present, ABC is set to announce its schedule May 21, followed by NBC, May 23; Fox, May 29, and CBS, May 30. Below is a look at the key needs of each network, existing series expected to return or be canceled, and some development projects that appear headed for the fall schedule.

ABC:

New series that have been given early commitments for the fall include *Cop Rock* from Steven Bochco; *Dr. Ruth's House*, starring Dr. Ruth Westheimer, and *Just Life* (formerly *Chicago*), starring Victoria Principal.

Cop Rock, an hour musical/drama, has been given a 13-episode commitment. Ronnie Cox and Ernie Hudson star in the project, targeted as a 10 p.m. show. *Dr. Ruth's House* has also been given a 13-episode commitment. The half-hour comedy is produced by Reeves Entertainment. The *Just Life* project, from Aaron Spelling Productions, will have at least 13 episodes, and features Principal as a private investigator in the district attorney's office.

ABC, which finished the season in second place, winning Monday, Tuesday and Friday nights, has its most pressing need on Saturday. Indeed, the network's average margin of victory over NBC on the nights it wins was 5.3, compared to the 17.8 margin

of victory that NBC enjoys over ABC on Wednesday, Thursday and Saturday.

"If the *Saturday Mystery Movie* comes back, it will probably be just *Columbo* and *Kojak*, and possibly just *Columbo*, since they were the only ones that performed well," said Jody Hecker, Seltel program analyst. ABC will also have to look at the 8 p.m. to 9 p.m. time period after trying no less than five series in that slot—*Mr. Belvedere*, *Living Dolls*, *H.E.L.P.*, *Sunset Beat*

found its audience" in the second half of the season, said Hecker. *Twin Peaks*, currently in the slot, has shown audience decline on all but one of the weeks that it has aired, but the network is expected to give the show a slot on the schedule.

Existing series expected to be renewed for next season are *Roseanne*; *Doogie Howser, M.D.*; *The Wonder Years*; *Who's the Boss?*; *Growing Pains*; *Head of the Class*; *Full House*; *Perfect Strangers*; *Life Goes On*, and *America's Funniest Home Videos*.

Shows that could get canceled in deciding the new schedule are *China Beach*, which received a 13-script commitment two months ago; *Capital News*; *Anything But Love*; *The Marshall Chronicles*; *B.L. Stryker*, and *Christine Cromwell* movies of the *Saturday Night Mystery Movie*.

CBS:

The network has given an early green light to two projects which may get a summer tryout rather than going straight to the fall schedule. *Northern Exposure* stars Rob Morrow in a drama with comedic overtones. Produced by Cine-Nevada Productions in association with Procter & Gamble Productions and MCA-TV, the hour drama has been given an eight-episode commitment. *Family Dog*, a half-hour comedy from Universal Television, has also been given a production commitment from the network. Sources said network executives have not decided whether the show will premiere on the fall schedule or be used at mid-season.

One night expected to undergo major change is Tuesday night from 9 p.m. to 11 p.m., where CBS most recently scheduled a movie, using the same strategy they used last year when their series attempts failed. This year, after *Wolf* and *Island Son* were pulled (*Rescue: 911* from 8-9 p.m. on Tuesday is one of two series, among nine, that debuted in the fall that still remain on the schedule), CBS went back to airing theatri-

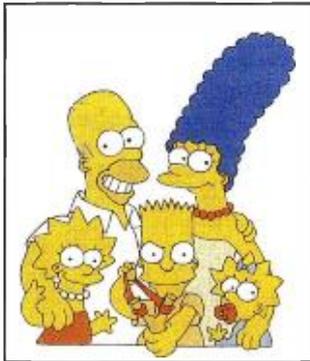
On the way back for '90



NBC's 'Cheers'



CBS's 'Murphy Brown'



Fox's 'The Simpsons'



ABC's 'Roseanne'

and *Elvis*—none of which are expected to return.

ABC's other problem night, Thursday, probably won't undergo the amount of restructuring that Saturday will, said most observers. *Father Dowling Mysteries* (Thursday, 8 p.m. to 9 p.m.), which was picked up from NBC a year ago, is the most effective show the network has programed against *The Cosby Show* in five years, regularly providing at or near a 20 share. *The Young Riders* at 9 p.m. "caught on and